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# Delta Plans Presented, Attacked

## Consensus vital, Wilson exclaims

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### Sacramento

State and federal officials showed off three proposals yesterday to answer some of California's most dire water needs, including an option to build a Peripheral Canal around the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta — but that plan immediately drew fire from conservationists.

Saying that every Californian's future depends on their reaching a consensus, Governor Pete Wilson urged all those with stake in the outcome to stay engaged in the public discussions and not to resort to a bumper-sticker war.

The proposals have the goal of sending more water south through the delta while protecting the environment and strengthening levees. Wilson said they would help not only California water consumers but also the state's fish hatcheries, farmers, businesses and industries.

"Consensus is easier to achieve when you're not apportioning scarcity but instead taking steps to provide an adequate supply for all purposes," Wilson said at a news conference.

But no sooner did CalFed — a group of state and federal agencies with management

and regulatory responsibility for the Bay-Delta area — release the draft environmental report than conservationists begin criticizing it for its shortcomings.

"To date, (CalFed officials) have failed to fully explore the potential for major reform that includes water marketing, groundwater systems and real water management controls that other states have enacted," Representative George Miller, D-Martinez, said in an interview. "I'm worried that we're edging forward pouring concrete and not looking at reform."

Yesterday's release of the CalFed report initiated a 75-day period of public review and comment that will include 12 meetings statewide, including in Oakland, Pittsburg, Walnut Grove and Santa Cruz. After that, CalFed will forward to state and federal officials a preferred alternative.

The Bay-Delta is the largest estuary on the West Coast, a maze of tributaries, sloughs and islands that are havens for plants and animals and a source of water to California's farmland.

Under one proposal, a 44-mile canal would run around the delta's eastern flank, channeling water from the Sacramento River directly to enormous pumps near Tracy to be sent south.

A second option would make only minor changes in the delta's plumbing, and the third would widen the delta channels and flood a portion of the area.

The cost of each of CalFed's three alternatives range from \$8 billion to \$10.5 billion, to

be paid for through bonds, rate increases, and federal and state funds, said CalFed Director Lester Snow.

CalFed officials said the proposal for a delta canal differs from the one that was defeated by the state's voters in 1982. The new canal would carry only half the water. Officials said many of the water conservation concerns that opponents had then are being addressed.

CalFed found an unlikely ally in Sunne McPeak, president of the Bay Area Council and a vehement opponent of the Peripheral Canal in the early 1980s while she was a Contra Costa County supervisor.

Drawing on her experience fighting the Peripheral Canal, McPeak said today's proposal is different in many ways.

"This is a very important milestone in the history of California's water debate," said McPeak, who also is co-chairman of the Bay Delta Advisory Council. "It will lead to an enhancement in water quality. While we're not in total agreement on every element, we must pledge throughout the process to remain at the table."

But the Sierra Club's Jackie McCort said CalFed's proposal amounted to "going down the same old tired path to laying more concrete, installing costly new dams and canals which taxpayers are tired of paying for."

McCort said the proposal needed a more thorough analysis of conservation and efficiency. Using drip irrigation, for instance, she said, California could see a 15 percent reduction in water use.